



Facilitating e-veterinary certification based on single window system

The overall goal of this Project was to assist developing countries by facilitating their understanding and potential use of e-veterinary certification to better engage in international trade of animals and animal products through information sharing, country visits by experts, and providing information on what other international organisations are doing in relation to e-veterinary certification.

Given the lack of comprehensive information about the state of play of implementation of e-veterinary certification, the Project was designed and conducted to identify the basic features of currently-operating systems, including technical details, the drivers for introducing e-certification (e.g. economic development, trade facilitation, enhancing regulatory controls), and challenges in overcoming the hurdles preventing widespread use.

Considering the desirability of establishing a streamlined border processes (including, as appropriate, single window systems) compatible with e-veterinary certification, a survey was developed to include an additional element regarding the state of play of implementation of streamlined regulatory processes for cross-border trade. The Project also considered issues of e-certification in other SPS areas to enable a clear picture on trade facilitation. Based on the review of these documents and other relevant information, a set of recommendations for the OIE, its Member Countries, and other relevant stakeholders, including resource partners were developed.

More information about the findings of the project and the final report is available [here](#).

STDF/PG/609

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/07/2018

End Date

31/07/2020

Project Value (US\$)

\$200,748

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$146,048

Beneficiaries

Developing countries

Implementing Entities

Background

In 2015, the STDF Working Group took particular interest in electronic certification in SPS, and through a session of discussion concluded that "there is still a lack of understanding amongst SPS and trade practitioners regarding the implementation of e-certification."

A subsequent STDF "Seminar on electronic SPS certification" conducted in June 2016 focused on addressing the opportunities and challenges related to the implementation of electronic SPS certification systems, particularly in developing countries.

On both occasions, the applicable standards on the animal health side were presented by the OIE, with presentations about actual cases including meat trade at the Seminar. From these discussions it was apparent that:

- Electronic certification for animal health is not widely used;
- Understanding of the application of electronic certification among veterinary services is still limited, especially in developing countries.

Ultimately, a project submitted by five applicant countries (Cambodia, Eswatini, Nigeria, Paraguay and Zimbabwe) was approved by the STDF Working Group at its meeting on 30-31 October 2017 and the OIE was appointed to implement the Project, as requested by the applicant countries.

Results

The main product developed by the Project was a report drafted by a consultant and reviewed by the experts of the Reference Group and the Steering Committee. The report describes the state of play of veterinary certification and single window systems in selected developing and developed countries as well as current activities undertaken by relevant international organisations.

The report is structured in two sections based on the following main outputs:

Output 1: Development and implementation of in-country surveys

The OIE together with the Steering Committee developed an in-country survey plan based on:

- A questionnaire. 11 countries completed the questionnaire; and
- In-country visits. 5 developing countries received a visit by experts on certification and single window.

The Project included an in-country survey for developed and developing countries (Australia, Chile, Eswatini, France, Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Paraguay, Singapore, United Kingdom and Zimbabwe) aimed to collect information on their current situation in relation to e-certification and single window.

Eswatini, Malaysia, Nigeria, Paraguay and Zimbabwe also received a visit from an expert on electronic certification and single window seeking have a deeper insight into their current national situation.

Output 2: Research about on-going work on e-certification in other SPS areas and analysis of the commonalities and differences

Based on a desk-top research, commonalities and differences were identified between other SPS areas and veterinary certification, based on experiences from the following organisations: Codex Alimentarius; International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC); Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the World Customs Organisation (WCO).

These four existing frameworks in SPS areas are described below:

- The Codex Alimentarius framework includes an electronic working group that develops guidance on paperless certification and provides a data model of its Generic Official Certificate which does not introduce specific hardware and/or software requirements at national level.
- The IPPC framework, consisting in the development of the Global ePhyto Hub and the Generic ePhyto National System.
- The eCITES framework, which includes making available a CITES e-permitting toolkit and working together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on UNCTAD's Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) eCITES module.

- The WCO framework on exchange of information "Globally Networked Customs", encompasses all relevant tools and standards including the WCO Data Model, a semantic and messaging standard which does not require specific hardware and/or software solutions at national level.

Recommendations

The Project recommendations are aimed towards helping developing countries in their understanding of e-veterinary certification at a national and international level.

Based on the findings of the report, the OIE has been advised to consider the following recommendations:

OIE Standard-Setting Process

1. Introduction into the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the Aquatic Animal Health Code additional guidance on the transition from a paper to an electronic format on the basis of a single window system.
2. The establishment of an ad hoc Group with dedicated tasks with regards to e-veterinary certification on the basis of a single window system.

OIE collaboration with other International Organisations

e-Veterinary certification at national level should not be an isolated process of the Veterinary Authorities and similarly e-veterinary certification at international level should not become an isolated process for the OIE. Cooperation between the OIE, IPPC and Codex as well as Customs authorities will help countries effectively develop e-veterinary certification for international trade on the basis of a Single Window system.

Specific recommendations to the OIE include:

- Further explore collaboration with the Codex Alimentarius and the IPPC in the framework of the WTO SPS Committee meetings.
- Cooperate with the WCO Secretariat and relevant experts on enabling inclusive digital collaboration between government agencies in the context of a Single Window environment.
- Work with the UNCTAD to develop a standardised e-veterinary certification technical solution for export and import with the use of the OIE Derived Information Package from the WCO.
- Further explore with the Codex Alimentarius Commission the possibility of incorporating the Codex Derived Information Package from WCO in the above cooperation with UNCTAD on standardised e-certification technical solutions for import and export.
- Further explore with the IPPC Secretariat the possibility of exchanging electronic veterinary certificates through the Global ePhyto Hub; the potential for expansion of the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) to enable it to be used for international trade of animals and animal products.
- Investigate the possibility of a partnership with the World Bank Group in its efforts to implement the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Considerations on a technical solution

Taking into consideration the (expected) benefits and challenges for countries that have important import and export volumes combined with limited resources and IT infrastructure, the availability of an off-the-shelf software solution for electronic certification, that can be configured to respond to the specific requirements and needs of the Veterinary Authorities, including adaptation to national languages, government border requirements and workflows during import and export, might be considered a welcome and feasible option. This software solution must not only support international exchanges but also provide for digitisation of processes at national level in a Single Window environment.

This off-the-shelf software solution is expected to benefit from cooperation between the OIE and the WCO on the WCO data model and the OIE Derived Information Package. Formal validation of the Package will also assist countries to better engage in international trade of animals and animal products through e-veterinary certification.

The WCO data model also contains the Codex Derived Information Package. Countries with limited resources and IT infrastructure might be interested in working with an off-the-shelf software solution for electronic certification by Veterinary Authorities and for electronic certification by food authorities. Such a multi-disciplinary software solution can be created by incorporating the WCO data model OIE Derived Information Package together with the Codex Derived Information Package.

